



## A MESSAGE FROM THE U.S. SECRETARY OF LABOR

“At the core of what was envisioned by the drafters of the African Growth and Opportunity Act was a vision where increased trade is a win for everyone, including investors, businesses, workers and their communities. During this year’s AGOA Forum, we want to stress that this kind of inclusive growth is possible only when workers’ rights are protected and the workforce is equipped with relevant skills and know-how to access the immense opportunities that exist for Africa.”

— Tom Perez, U.S. Secretary of Labor



the elimination of certain child labor practices. USDOL/ILAB assists in the annual AGOA eligibility review process and funds technical assistance programs to protect and improve workers’ rights in AGOA countries.

### AGOA and Labor

As part of the annual AGOA eligibility review process, USDOL/ILAB examines each country’s efforts to implement and enforce internationally recognized worker rights. These rights include the right of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, prohibitions on forced and compulsory labor, a minimum age for the employment of children, and acceptable conditions of work with respect to minimum wages, hours of work, and occupational safety and health. USDOL/ILAB also assesses each government’s efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

### Technical Assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa

In addition to administering the labor provisions of AGOA, USDOL/ILAB provides technical assistance to several AGOA countries in order to support their efforts to improve worker rights and reduce the worst forms of child labor. ILAB’s work runs from rescuing children working in mines and prostitution, to helping governments develop plans and policies to tackle exploitive child labor, to providing workplace-based HIV/AIDS education, to monitoring labor rights in the garment manufacturing sector. Through these programs, ILAB works closely with implementing partners such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), labor ministries, education ministries, workers’ and employers’ organizations, health organizations, institutes of statistical, social and economic research, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based groups, UNICEF, and other institutions.

### The Mission

The mission of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs (USDOL/ILAB) is to advance worker rights and livelihoods, particularly for the world’s most vulnerable workers. We work globally to promote broad-based and inclusive economic growth, reduce economic inequality, and improve respect for workers’ rights and working conditions. Our efforts help ensure that workers around the world are treated fairly and are able to share in the benefits of the global economy.

### Background

USDOL works with the United States Trade Representative, Department of State, and other United States Government agencies to implement the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), focusing in particular on the labor provisions of the Act. AGOA authorizes the President to designate countries as eligible to receive its benefits if they are determined to have established, or are making continual progress toward establishing the protection of internationally recognized worker rights and



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Since 1999, ILAB has provided \$291 million to support projects in 45 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that protect workers and reduce the worst forms of child labor. ILAB is currently managing almost \$67 million in projects in Sub-Saharan Africa to reduce the worst forms of child labor and promote worker rights.

A significant portion of this ILAB funding supports efforts to reduce exploitative child labor by offering schooling opportunities to children and vocational training to youth under the age of 18. ILAB projects also seek to improve household livelihoods so families can overcome the need to rely on child labor to meet basic needs and are able send their children to school. Among the livelihood strategies used by ILAB are the provision of skills and functional literacy training and the promotion of parents' participation in village savings and loans programs. ILAB-funded projects also raise public awareness about child labor, support research and the collection of reliable data on child labor, and help governments strengthen their policies and enforcement of child labor and education laws.

ILAB efforts to combat child labor in Sub-Saharan Africa include projects in Ethiopia's weaving industry, Liberia's rubber sector, and artisanal gold mining in Burkina Faso. In Cote d'Ivoire and

Ghana, ILAB supports efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor in cocoa growing areas. As called for in the 2010 Declaration of Joint Action to Support the Implementation of the Harkin-Engel Protocol and its accompanying Framework of Action, ILAB is working with the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana and the International Chocolate and Cocoa Industry and to reduce the worst forms of child labor in these areas of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana by 70 percent in the aggregate by the year 2020.

In support of President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), ILAB will be funding a project in Uganda to address exploitative child labor by providing vulnerable youth ages 14 through 18 with education and vocational training and, for those of appropriate age, decent work opportunities.

In Lesotho, ILAB is funding a Better Work program, a joint initiative of the ILO and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). Better Work improves working conditions in global supply chains by combining labor monitoring and training in apparel factories. The program also educates workers and managers on labor rights and responsibilities. In its April 2013 public report, Better Work Lesotho reported that average non-compliance rates related to contracts and human resources, compensation, and working time were noticeably lower.

Since 2003, ILAB has provided technical assistance to Botswana and Swaziland as part of an HIV/AIDS Workplace Education Program. The program aims to: 1) reduce HIV/AIDS risk behaviors among the employees of targeted enterprises and their families, and 2) reduce employment discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS. The project has reached over 8000 people through workplace education activities, all 21 partner enterprises have increased the availability of quality HIV/AIDS workplace services, all national labor inspectors have been trained on mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into inspection protocols, and all partner enterprises have a collaborative agreement with an external HIV/AIDS resource organization or have hired a full time HIV/AIDS coordinator to facilitate a sustainable response to the epidemic.